ON THE GRAND

On the Grand is a quarterly publication distrubuted by the Grand River Conservation Authority to member municipalities and other interested persons and groups. It contains capsule news items concerning Conservation Authority programs and projects throughout the valley. Comments and suggestions will be welcome.

Administrative Office:
400 Clyde Road
Box 729, Cambridge, Ontario
N1R 5W6
Telephone: (519) 621-2761
FAX: (519) 621-4844

Volume 20 - Number 1 **Spring 1992**

Mother of all Largemouths

There is a good possibility that the biggest largemouth bass ever caught and photographed in Canada may turn out to be one taken from the Conservation Authority's own Damascus Lake, near Luther Marsh. Dennis Carson pulled his 9.25 lb bucketmouth out of the reservoir on October 16, 1990, "a nice bright day, but also a little windy" according to Mr. Carson.

According to the March 1992 issue of "*Angler & Hunter*," Mr. Carson's bass currently holds the record for the biggest largemouth caught in Canada and photographed. Two larger largemouths have been caught (10.44 and 9.75 lb), but they were not photographed.

(Photo: Shelburne Free Press)

ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

Election Results

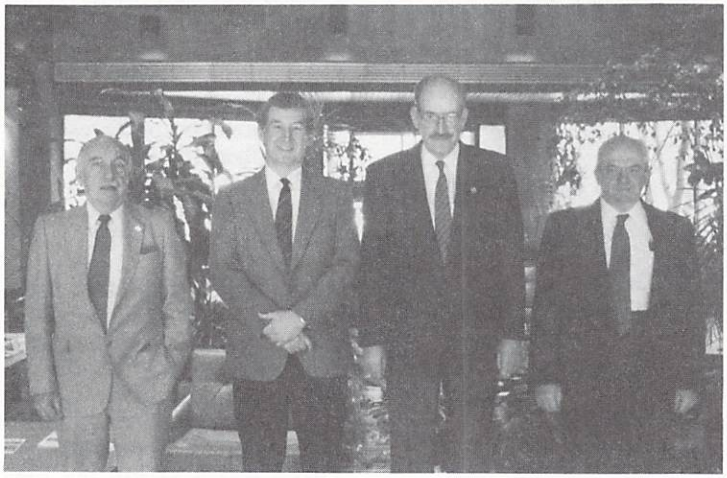
In contested elections at this year's Annual Meeting in Cambridge on February 26, Chairman Archie MacRobbie was re-elected for a third term, and Peter Krause was elected for his first term as Vice-Chairman. Mr. MacRobbie is also the Reeve of Puslinch Township. Mr. Krause has served on the GRCA Executive Committee since 1990, and as Chairman of the Land Use Advisory Board last year.

Returning to the Executive Committee are:
Lorne Brown of Belwood (Group 1)
Dr. Richard Christie (Region of Waterloo)
Mabel Dougherty of Onondaga (Group 8)
Douglas King of Cayuga (Region of Haldimand-Norfolk)
Barry Lee of Moffat (Region of Halton)
Allan Snowe of Arthur (Group 5).

New members elected to the Executive Committee include:

William McAdams (City of Guelph)
Ted Fairless (Region of Waterloo)
Jack Lennox of Kenilworth (Group 2)
Joe Martens of Branchton (Region of Waterloo).

In other news, the Conservation Authority's Chief Administrative Officer Allan R. Holmes has been elected Vice-Chairman of the Central Region Staff Committee of the Association of Conservation Authorities of Ontario. This position means that Mr. Holmes also sits on the Staff Executive Committee of the Association. Chairman Archie MacRobbie was appointed as a member at large for the ACAO of Ontario Central Region to serve on the Executive Committee of the Association Board of Directors.

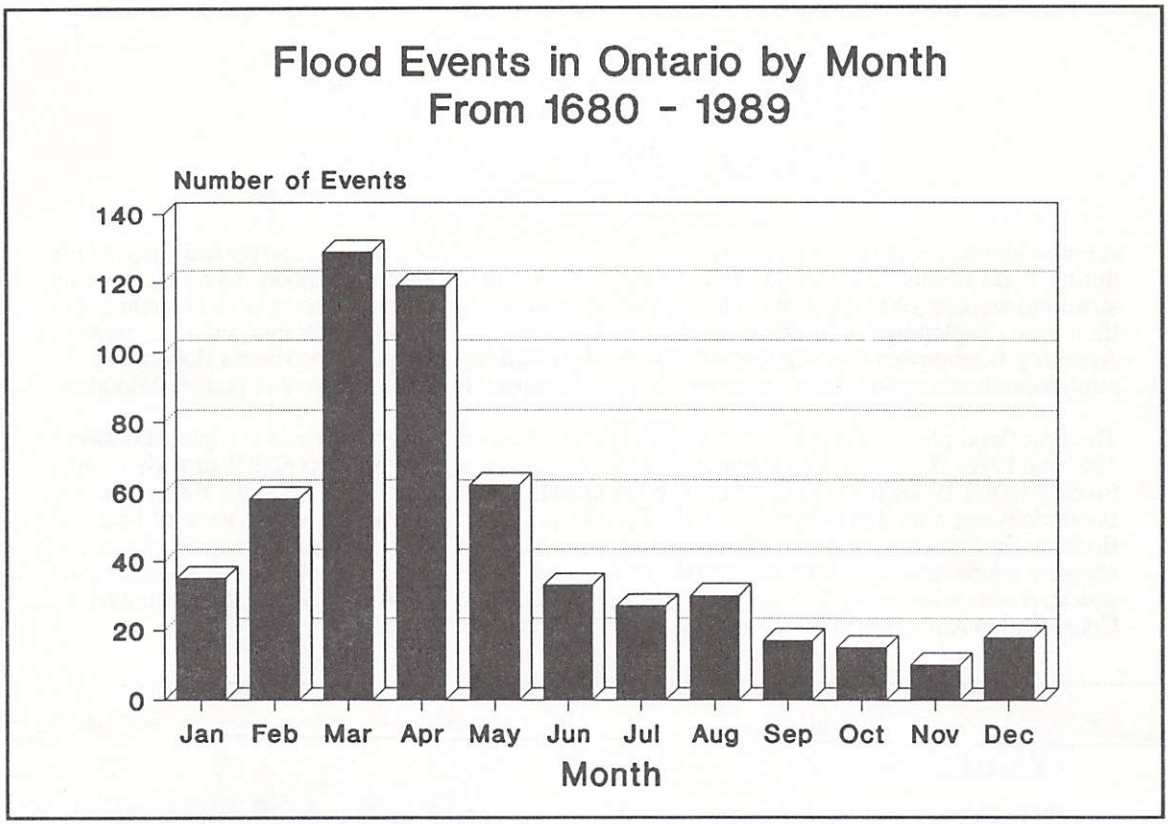


New Executive Committee Members - Bill McAdams (Guelph), Ted Fairless (Cambridge), Joe Martens (North Dumfries) and Jack Lennox (Kenilworth) were elected to the GRCA Executive Committee by the General Membership at the Annual Meeting on February 26.

Taxpayer Relief

At the Annual Meeting, the membership also approved a "no increase" 1992 recessionary budget of $20,302,800, slightly down from last year's expenditures of $20,506,150.

The general levy to member municipalities of the Conservation Authority was held to a 0.0% increase. The unchanged levy means that the average cost to a taxpayer in the Grand River watershed in 1992 actually fell to $6.71, down from $7.19 per taxpayer in 1991. The provincial contribution to the GRCA budget was unknown at the time of the meeting, and Members voted to review the budget should the provincial grant be significantly lower than last year.



Three Hundred Years of Flooding - The co-ordinator's meeting and the test of the flood warning system are held each year in February just before the peak season for spring flooding begins. The accompanying chart illustrates the distribution of 547 flood events in Ontario from 1680 to 1989. (Chart adapted from "A Report on Ontario Flood History," produced by The Water Network, May 1991.)

Reducing Flood Risk

During a flood emergency, the Grand River Conservation Authority is responsible for monitoring rising river levels, and operating the Grand River valley's reservoir system to reduce the impact and level of flooding. The GRCA also predicts how severe flooding will be, and issues accurate and up to date Flood Warning Messages. These messages are relayed to watershed municipalities, which then implement their specific flood emergency procedures.

With the approach of this spring's flood season, the Conservation Authority held its annual Flood Co-ordinator's Meeting in Cambridge on February 19. The purpose of the meeting was to remind municipal officials of their role, and of the Conservation Authority's role during major flood events. A total of 105 staff from various government agencies involved with emergency flood planning attended. This year's test of the Flood Warning System was successful, with only minor delays in receipt and acknowledgement of the test flood warning message. At the meeting, Manager of Water Resources Planning Lorrie Minshall stated that current snow pack and river ice cover conditions indicated that there was a moderate spring flood potential existing along the Grand River as of mid-February.

Why the GRCA Does Flood Plain Mapping

A major function of the Conservation Authority is to reduce property damage and potential loss of life during flood events. One method is to protect existing development on flood plains by building structural works such as dams and dikes to physically control flooding. A non-structural method is to limit new development that could be affected by flooding. In order to do this, the Conservation Authority is empowered to regulate new investment or development on the river's flood plain. To implement these regulations, flood plains have been mapped to show the extent of potential flooding.

The first flood plain mapping for the Grand River and its main tributaries was completed between 1964 and 1970. The federal and provincial Flood Damage Reduction Program (FDRP) provided partial funding in the 1980s for updating this original mapping. Under FDRP in 1991, the final report for flood plain mapping was completed on the Speed and Eramosa Rivers to indicate areas of potential flooding. In February a series of open houses were held in Cambridge, Guelph and Rockwood to acquaint residents living along the Speed and Eramosa Rivers with the results of the mapping. Any residents who wish to know if their properties are affected by GRCA regulations should contact the Conservation Authority before proceeding with development.

Wildlife Returns to Laurel Creek

The expansion of the Laurel Creek Nature Centre in Waterloo has been completed, and the centre is back in business again. The renovations were funded by the Grand Valley Conservation Foundation in co-operation with the Conservation Authority, and Waterloo Public and Separate School Boards. This expansion has more than doubled the space available for the public in the centre. Large new windows ensure that visitors are welcomed to bright, sunny areas at the centre. There is increased storage area for the use of staff and the school boards, and there is finally an office for the staff. The nature centre is now wheelchair accessible, as are the nature trails at Laurel Creek. The official re-opening of the centre will take place once the final landscaping is completed in the late spring. Until then, the staff at the centre hope to see you on Sunday at their next Conservation for Communities program.

Zebra Mussel Update

Zebra mussels were accidentally dumped into the Laurel Creek reservoir by a member of the public in June 1991. The GRCA responded by treating the affected area and carrying out an intensive monitoring program. Following this incident, zebra mussel index stations were established throughout the Grand River basin to determine if zebra mussels were infesting the river system. During July and October surveys were carried out at sites from Luther Marsh to Byng Island and to date no further indication of zebra mussels were found at any of the areas sampled.

Go Fish!

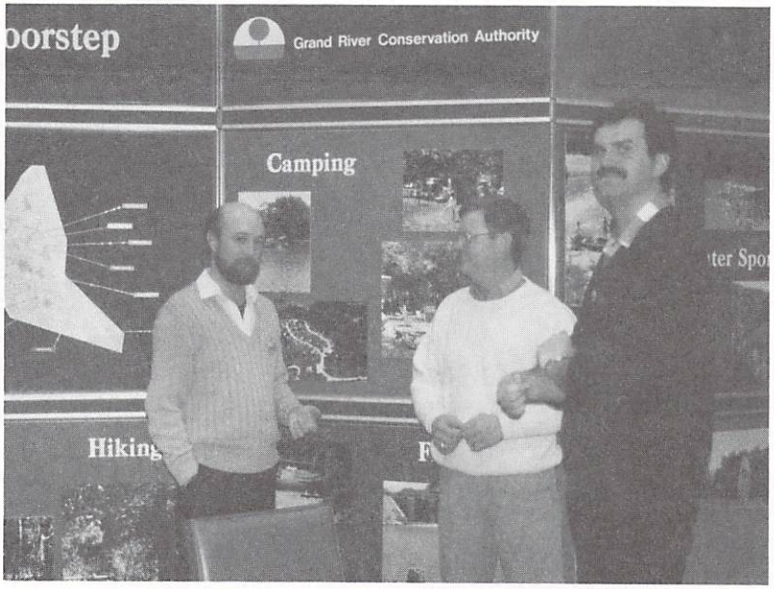
Young anglers are invited to attend GRCA fishing camps again this summer. Students 9 to 12 years old can learn about fishing techniques, rules and ethics, and water safety, as well as how to recognize different species of fish. The camps run from 9:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m. daily on the following dates: July 6-9 (Guelph Lake Nature Centre), July 13-15 (Shade's Mills Conservation Area), and July 20-22 (Apps' Mill Nature Centre). The cost is $100.

The Conservation Authority wishes to thank Bob Izumi, of "The Real Fishing Show," for his generous donation of 30 fishing board games which will be taken home by children enrolled in the camps. J & P Fishing Charters of Waterloo and the Ontario Fisherman Magazine are also sponsoring this year's Fishing Camps.

In addition, this year an advanced fishing camp is available as a half day charter on Lake Erie to fish for walleye. This charter costs $75 and includes equipment and transportation from Cambridge. Enrollment numbers for all camps are limited. For further information, or to enroll your child or grandchild for the camps, contact the Communications Section at (519) 621-2761 in Cambridge.

Our Outdoors on Your Doorstep

A new GRCA exhibit entitled "Our Outdoors on Your Doorstep" has been on display at a number of locations during March. The staffed display appeared at Camperama '92 at Bingeman Park in Kitchener from March 5-8, Outdoor Canada in Toronto from March 13-22, and at Hiker's Haven in Oakville from March 23-28. The exhibit promotes outdoor education and recreation facilities offered in our valley by the Conservation Authority.



Step Right Up - Manager of Information Services Ralph Beaumont, Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area Superintendent Jack Griffin and Brant Conservation Area Superintendent Don Farncombe welcome visitors to the GRCA's "Our Outdoors on Your Doorstep" exhibit at Bingeman Park's Camperama '92 in Kitchener.

800,000 in 1992

The Conservation Authority will be planting approximately 800,000 trees this year, with about 75% of this total planted on private land. Some small scale plantings of interest include the establishment of windbreaks and riparian buffers at the Elora Research Station of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food. In another project, funding has been approved for a three year extension of the well received Greening of Guelph's Industrial Basin, which will see 12,000 trees planted this year. The GRCA will also undertake a major intercropping planting on 30 acres of land in Nichol Township. Intercropping reforests land by interspersing rows of trees between fields of agricultural crops.

Outstanding in Their Field - Water Quality Advisor Tracey Ryan and Soil Conservation Technician Charlie Roland are two employees of the GRCA's Joint Agricultural Soil and Water Conservation Program. They were sowing grass to establish a buffer strip along a stream at a National Soil Conservation Program demonstration site in Mornington Township last year. *(Photo: Milverton Sun)*

The Conestogo, the Speed and the Nith

This year Water Quality Advisor Tracey Ryan is working with Environmental Technician - Agriculture Christine Murray implementing the Ministry of the Environment's new five year CURB (Clean Up Rural Beaches) program. Under this program, landowners and farmers along the upper reaches of the Conestogo, Nith and Speed Rivers are eligible for grants of up to 75% to cover the costs of improvements to their land. Eligible funding areas include improvements in manure management, milkhouse washwater disposal systems and private septic systems, and by restricting livestock access to streams.

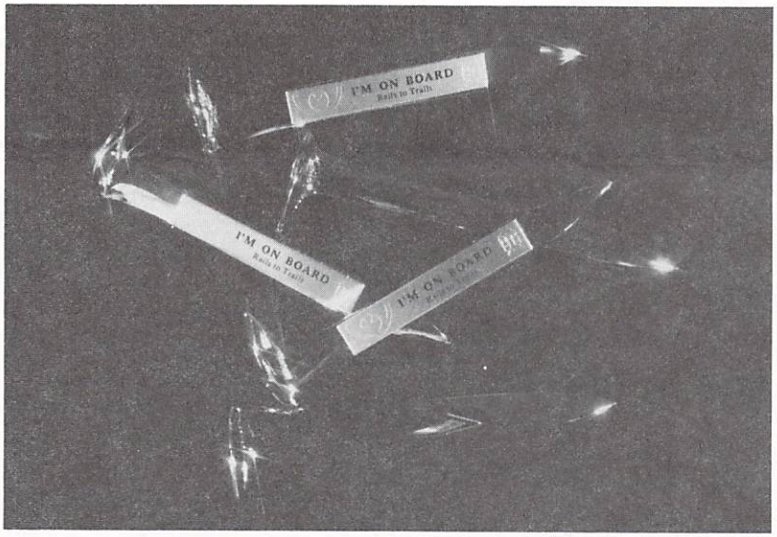
Brantford Trail System Expands

A Federal grant totalling $200,000 has been received from the Environmental Partners Fund of Environment Canada to extend the trail network along Brantford's river front. The grant application, sponsored by the Grand Valley Trails Association, will be matched by an equal contribution by the Brant Waterways Foundation. The work will consist of four new 1.5 km nature trail loops, which will be accessed by existing pathways in the city. Interpretive focal points along the route will highlight flood plain lands and the natural environment within the river valley.

Much of the trail will be located on GRCA and city lands. GRCA staff were instrumental in supplying the interpretive data required for the grant application, and along with Brantford city staff will be providing technical expertise when constructing the new trail network. The planting of Carolinian trees, natural erosion control and water quality improvement works will also be components of the project.

The (next to) Last Spike

Over 170 people were on board for the 4th annual Grand Valley Conservation Foundation fund raising dinner held at the Valhalla Inn in Kitchener on January 30. Former MP and mayor of Toronto David Crombie spoke on the value of planning for the future and preserving open space. Mr. Crombie is now a commissioner working on the federal-provincial plan for the Lake Ontario waterfront, and his comments were particularly appropriate at a dinner to raise funds for the purchase of the green corridor along the abandoned rail line between Cambridge and Paris.



I'm On Board - Chrome plated railway spikes taken from the Cambridge to Paris railway were on sale at the dinner, and the proceeds went toward the purchase of the railway land. The contractor who dismantled the line donated the spikes, and Kuntz Electro Plating of Kitchener donated the cost of chrome plating.
The dinner raised $15,000.00 toward the purchase of the rail lands, and souvenir spikes are available from the Foundation for $100 each, for those who would like to support the Rails to Trails project.

Popular GRCA General Manager Retires

On March 31, Mac Coutts, the well known and respected General Manager of the Grand River Conservation Authority, retired after 39 years of service.

Mac began work with the original Grand Valley Conservation Authority in 1953 as its first employee. Today, with a permanent staff of over 100, the GRCA has become a leader in conservation and environmental work in this part of southern Ontario.

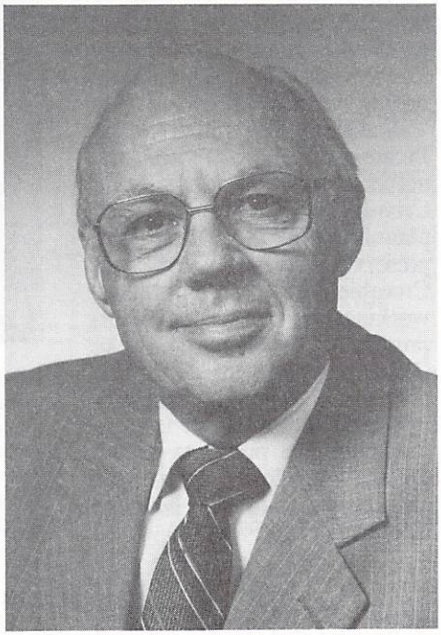
In the early years, concern for the environment was not as widespread as it is today. From the beginning of his career, Mac coordinated many conservation projects and programs that would otherwise have been lost to us today.

The tangible results of his career have included the planting of 25 million trees over the past 40 years, as well as the preservation of thousands of hectares of forest, wetland and wildlife habitat.

Campers, boaters and picnickers will be familiar with the GRCA's Conservation Areas. Under his tenure scenic parks such as Elora Gorge, Rockwood, Pinehurst Lake and Byng Island were purchased and developed to provide outdoor recreation opportunities for three-quarters of a million visitors every year.

Less visible have been the technical water management programs brought to fruition. These include the upgrading of flood warning and river level monitoring systems. Major reservoirs such as the Guelph, Conestogo and Shand dams continue to provide flood control and maintain valuable water supplies for the benefit of downstream municipalities. In recent years, these dams have been adapted to generate clean and efficient hydro power.

It is significant that much of Mac's effort was centred on making people more aware of the Grand River valley's importance. He continually stressed its value as a watershed unit, and the need to conserve and wisely use its natural resources. As a result, a major highlight of Mac's leadership came in 1990, when the Grand received its formal nomination as a Canadian Heritage River.



With such a varied and impressive list of accomplishments to his credit, Mac Coutts has certainly left a legacy of which any individual should be proud. His leadership, at home in the Grand River valley, was often translated into progressive programs adopted by many of the other 37 Conservation Authorities in Ontario.

Even so, there is much conservation work still to be done. The work of conserving our environment will never be totally complete.

Under the guidance of Mac Coutts, the fledgling and visionary environmental programs of the 1950s have resulted in many tangible benefits for future generations. Even as we enjoy these benefits, Mac's wish is that we continue to build on the foundation his career has provided.